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OATEN STOP SERIES

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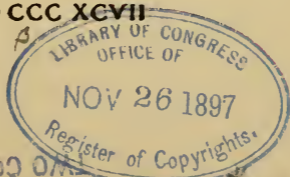


ONE WAY TO THE WOODS BY EVALEEN STEIN



BOSTON COPELAND AND DAY

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY
DEAR FATHER
JOHN A. STEIN
I LOVINGLY DEDICATE
THIS MY FIRST BOOK

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THE song of Nature stirs
Within the budding trees ;
Her true interpreters
The birds and honey-bees ;
And wintry winds that freeze
And toss the frosty firs,
What minstrelsies of these
That are not wholly hers ?

Dear heart, I pray it be
Some little song of mine
May murmur unto thee,
From out the written line,
Some note of that divine
Eternal melody,
And make the gladness thine
It brings and sings to me !

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS



A LEVEL reach of April sun,
Beside the river, faintly blue,
That purls and swirls and twinkles through
The sycamores, but just begun
 To bud anew ;
Then up a gently rising hill,
Beneath tall walnut trees, until
Some tufts of flaky hawthorns strew
 And powder all the way with white ;
On, past a farmhouse hidden quite
In drifts of cherry bloom ; and still
 Keep to the north, beyond the bend
Abreast whose sharply curving turn
 The distant roadway seems to end
In banks of brake and lady-fern,
And willow boughs, in youthful hue
Of tenderest green that ever grew,
 Verge into view.

There, facing westward, loiter slow,
While troops of robins, rollicking
 Among the bluebells, wing and sing ;
And gladly as the robins, so
Let Nature's gracious overflow

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

Of light and life steep every sense
In depths of joyous indolence !
Thus, pacing leisurely, push through
The wayside weeds and meadow-rue
And wild witch-hazels, where a few
White-turbaned bloodroots blossoming,
Like small green-caftaned pilgrims, bring
The shrine of Spring
Their sweet belated offering.

Then loose a leaning gate, and bold
Fare on, across a cornfield where,
Half-buried by the busy share,
The stalks of stubble shine like gold,
And, freshly turned, the furrowed mold
Lies rich and bare.

Tall daisy stems already chain
The farther gate, that leads again
Into a long, light, grassy lane,
Where wagon-tracks of tawny brown,
Inlaid with mosses, wind adown
Through new green sheen of winter grain.
The hedges there on either side
Are leafless yet, but all the more
In airy, universal, wide
High-tide,

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

The golden April sunbeams pour
Between their ramparts, closely set,
And filter through their silver net
Of thorny interlacing boughs ;
The spreading redbud branches lean
Like rosy coral in between,
And in the distance, faintly seen,
Some white sheep browse,
And half a score of lazy cows
Crop off the pasture's tender green.

But by and by, upon the right,
There breaks a sudden gleam of white ;
The fitful hum of honey-bees ;
And, tinkling in its interval,
You catch the call
Of orchard orioles, — then all
The blowing, snowing apple-trees
Burst into sight !
Ah, what more exquisite delight,
What sweets in all the world more sweet,
With more pure tenderness replete,
Than some old orchard holds? And none
Of all beneath the April sun,
Can boast aught sweeter than this one !
— I fancy that I see it now,
Its sprays of bloom, that sway and toss ;

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

('Twas there I broke this little bough,
Whose waxy clusters, pink and white,
Leaned so enticingly across
The ragged fence-rails, gray with moss,
The very trees seemed to invite
Their own bright loss !)

But then, in truth, one needs must pause
Beside this self-same spot, because,
O'ergrown with dandelions and weeds,
The roadway ends ; but winding thence,
A violet-tufted footpath leads
Through scented depths, and ways
apart,
Through shadowed aisles and thickets dense,
Down through a deep fern-filled ravine,
And on, into the hidden heart
Of all the woodland's growing green.

Beneath tall shafts of elm and oak,
The trailing, brown, wild grape-vine swings,
And in long wreaths the woodbine clings
Round tangled undergrowth that springs
Just high enough for one to stroke
The little linden leaves, and feel
The downy spice-wood buds, and steal
A glimpse into a bluebird's nest.

THE MARCH FROSTS

In crinkled verdure, here and there,
The buckeye boughs show newly drest ;
And dogwood branches whiten where
A tiny stream slips down below,
Whose murmurous, faintly-fluting flow,
Through long lush grass and starweed, frets ;
There golden-yellow cowslips grow ;
And there I found these violets.

THE MARCH FROSTS

THE little leaves that tip the trees
With palest greenery everywhere,
O bitter nights, that blight and freeze,
And hurtling winds, and icy air,
Forbear ! Forbear !
Have you no tenderness for these,
Nor any care ?

No pity for the buds that break
And fringe the maples, rosy red,
The starting apple-sprays, that make
A silver fretwork overhead ?
When these are dead,
How shall the April for their sake
Be comforted ?

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

Oh, all my heart is full of pain !
The hurt they feel is hurt to me !
The helpless little leaves ! I fain
Would cherish them so tenderly,
It might not be
Such cruel grief should fall again
On any tree !

I would that I could gently fold
Against my breast, for sheltering,
Each tiniest bud the peach-boughs hold,
And every gracious burgeoning
Of everything ;
So fondling them, through frost and cold,
Until the spring !

FEAST OF PALMS

ONCE where green palms were laid,
Rode strangest cavalcade
Men e'er beheld ;
For in the midst of it
Lowly a God did sit,
It so in holy writ
Stands chronicled.

FEAST OF PALMS

What though in triumph proud
The glad exulting crowd
 Flung wide the palm,
The joyful throngs between,
Over the boughs of green,
He rode with humble mien,
 Divinely calm.

Aye, what were earthly prize
To him whose prescient eyes
 Foresaw the thorn ;
Foresaw all things to be,
And kingliest victory
Of meek humility,
 With patience borne ?

Then bring ye palms to-day,
And holy, lowly pray,
 Nor nourish pride ;
Whoso in gentleness
God's triumph doth confess,
His heart the King will bless,
 And therein ride.

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

BUDDING-TIME TOO BRIEF

O LITTLE buds, break not so fast !
The spring's but new.
The skies will yet be brighter blue,
And sunny too.
I would you might thus sweetly last
Till this glad season's overpast,
Nor hasten through.

It is so exquisite to feel
The light, warm sun ;
To merely know the winter done,
And life begun ;
And to my heart no blooms appeal
For tenderness so deep and real,
As any one

Of these first April buds, that hold
The hint of spring's
Rare perfectness that May-time brings.
So take not wings !
Oh, linger, linger, nor unfold
Too swiftly through the mellow mold,
Sweet growing things !

IN MEXICO

And errant birds, and honey-bees,
 Seek not to wile,
 And sun, let not your warmest smile
 Quite yet beguile
The young peach-boughs and apple-trees
To trust their beauty to the breeze ;
 Wait yet awhile !

IN MEXICO

THE cactus towers, straight and tall,
Through fallow fields of chaparral ;
And here and there, in paths apart,
A dusky peon guides his cart,
 And yokes of oxen journey slow,
 In Mexico.

And oft some distant tinkling tells
Of muleteers, with wagon-bells
 That jangle sweet across the maize,
And green agave stalks that raise
 Rich spires of blossoms, row on row,
 In Mexico.

Upon the whitened city walls
The golden sunshine softly falls,
 On archways set with orange trees,

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

On paven courts and balconies
Where trailing vines toss to and fro,
In Mexico.

And patient little donkeys fare
With laden saddle-bags, and bear
Through narrow ways quaint water-jars
Wreathed round with waxen lily stars
And scarlet poppy-buds that blow,
In Mexico.

In liquid syllables, the cries
Of far fruit-venders faintly rise ;
And under thick palmetto shades,
And down cool covered colonnades,
The tides of traffic gently flow,
In Mexico.

When twilight falls, more near and clear
The tender southern skies appear,
And down green slopes of blooming limes
Come cascades of cathedral chimes ;
And prayerful figures worship low,
In Mexico.

A land of lutes and witching tones,
Of silver, onyx, opal stones ;

JANUARY

A lazy land, wherein all seems
Enchanted into endless dreams ;
And never any need they know,
In Mexico,

Of life's unquiet, swift advance ;
But slipped into such gracious trance,
The restless world speeds on, unfelt,
Unheeded, as by those who dwelt
In olden ages, long ago,
In Mexico.

JANUARY

TO and fro,
To and fro,
Athwart the tingling icy air,
The linden branches blow, and so,
With warp of wind and woof of snow,
The weaver Winter's shuttles go ;
Such garment rare
The earth shall wear,
No softest ermine, neither vair,
Nor royal robing anywhere,
Nor any cunning looms may show
A fabric half so fair.

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

Upon the peach and apple trees
A thousand frosty fringes freeze ;
The moon-vines lace the lattice bars
In filmy filagrees.
The grass is flecked with flaky stars ;
The clover-tufts are hid from sight ;
And, now and then, a bird alight
With burst of gleeful flutter, jars
The pearly-laden red rose-hips,
And tilting airily, so tips
A tiny tempest, pelting down
The slender briars bare and brown ;
Or else some sudden flurry stirs
The fleecy drifts that freight the firs,
And swept from silvery tassels slips
A swirling cloud of trailing, bright,
Light scarfs of powdered white.

Along the wall the mossy stones
Have caught and fixed the falling flakes
Where, in quaint shapes, the grape-vine
makes
A low relief, with shadow-tones
More soft than carven marble takes ;
And whiter by each gust that blows
From off the roof, the climbing rose,
In chiselled wealth of bough and thorn,

JANUARY

About the doorway swiftly grows
A skilful sculpture ; but the sprays
Of honeysuckle, overborne
By crystal cargoes, cannot raise
Their icy-fettered maze.

A world of shining hints of hues,
Wherein all tints so gently fuse
In loveliness of light and shade,
No eye may tell whereof is made
Such pearly radiance ; nor invade
The violet depth thereof for clues
To clasp its color-keys, and know
The subtile secrets of the snow ;
The gleaming heavens, overlaid
With loosened spangles, softly fade
Into the gleaming earth below ;
And all horizons seem to be
Lost in white purity.

Aye, richly, Winter, to and fro
Thus let your silver shuttles go,
Till every sparkling web is spun ;
Still, with rare skill, unceasing ply
Your artful trickeries, and try
All chill enchantments, every one
Of all devices to beguile

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

This dreary overweary while
Wherein we wait the sun ;
And since the north must yet prevail,
And bitter cheerless winds assail,
Come, white-wing'd snows, and over all
Like shreds of floating feathers fall,
And lightly lie !
So, by and by,
— Ah, by and by ! —
Like blue flakes from an azure sky,
The April birds will fly.

UNFAMILIAR

THE world is all unreal to-day !
I strive to fathom whence
There sometimes comes this subtly strange
Dim sense of difference.

I gaze with gravely open eyes,
No flaw of sight may be ;
Still, somewise vaguely out of touch,
All things seem strange to me.

The grass, the sky, the apple-trees,
The honeysuckle vine,
I know I know them all, — and yet,
I cannot make them mine !

HEART SONG

Familiar tasks, with careful hand
And vision, even now
I fashion out ; although, in truth,
I scarce remember how.

All purposes, ambitions, aims,
All vital forces, take
A value slight as if I slept ;
But yet I am awake !

And vainly still my being seeks
To break this baffling spell
That blurs its clearer consciousness,
— Wherefore, I cannot tell.

HEART SONG

AS one who holds a charm'd witch-hazel
Rod,
And, as it veers, divines the hidden springs,
Whose whispered chimes and muffled mur-
muring
Had passed unheeded underneath the sod,
And as that spot, where careless footsteps
trod,
Then sparkles into silver speech and sings
A liquid song that wakes to burgeonings
The seeds imbedded in the barren clod,

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

So, dearest heart, within my breast have you
Pierced to the hidden melodies, and freed
Its singing springs, and touched the buried
seed
Of strange, bright buds whereof I never
knew !
Sweet beyond words, and of such subtile
power,
It seems my whole life breaking into flower.

THE MARSHES

PALE shimmering skies that lightly
bear
Fine filmy clouds that idly fare
In lazy wavering, wheresoe'er
The faint, uncertain breezes go ;
And even so,
In airy motion down below,
Tall wild rice, wild rice everywhere !

From out the marshy wilderness,
With plumes and pennons numberless,
In endless lines its armies press :
The very river it besets
And foils and frets
With leaves like little bayonets

THE MARSHES

That pierce the light and glint and gleam
And glitter in the midmost stream ;
 And so besieged and closed about,
 The captive waves lap in and out
Among the lacing stems, and creep
Through flowered grasses and through deep
 Translucent pools wherein they seem
 To drowse and dream
In draughts of liquid light, and steep
 In sunbeams, till, too spent to stir,
They sink into a golden sleep,
 So held perpetual prisoner.

 And over all there softly plays,
 Through summer days,
A marvel of pale violet haze
That sheathes and wreathes and overlays
 The thousand swaying plumes that rise
From all those silvery water-ways
 Wherein the drowsy river lies,
 Content to clasp the gracious skies
That twinkle through its tangled maze,
 And nestle in it lazywise.

And, now and then, a wild bird flies
 From hidden haunts among the reeds ;
Or, faintly heard, a bittern cries

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

Across the tasselled water-weeds ;
Or, floating upward from the green
Young willow wands, with sunny sheen
 On pearly breast, and wings outspread,
 A white crane journeys overhead.

For leagues on leagues no sign is there
 Of any snare
For human toil, nor grief nor care ;
The fields for bread lie elsewhere.
— Only the wild rice, straight and tall,
The wild rice waving over all.

THE DROUGHT

ON laden lands the web of gold,
Whose shuttles slanting sunbeams ply,
Lies broken-meshed upon the wheat,
 Where sere stalks die.

The young corn curls its husky blades,
 And bees athirst pale blossoms drain,
While languid buds bend low to earth
 Between the grain.

The fisher crosses, ankle-deep,
 The shrunken river as it moans

HYACINTHS

Through bleaching banks of barren sand
And scorching stones.

Gaunt trees pathetic to the sky
Their parched and crisping boughs stretch
out ;
O winds, go search the nimbus clouds,
And end the drought !

HYACINTHS

I PLACED the purple hyacinths
Above the lips I loved ;
Across the narrow mound a fret
Of leafy shadows moved.

Between the branches overhead
The April sky was blue,
And now and then a shining drift
Of little clouds looked through.

The blessed breath of bloomy things
Enfolded all the air,
And from the hedge of evergreen
A robin sang somewhere.

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

I strove to see the happy earth,
 But over bud and leaf
A sudden darkness fell, for I
 Was blinded by my grief.

O dearest heart ! they seemed so long ,
 The lonely, lonely years !
I laid my face against the grass,
 And showered it with tears.

THE BAYOU

BELOW the bridge, a little way
Float downward near the bank, beneath
 The trailing wild-grape vines that
 wreathe
The water-oaks and elms, and sway
 Far out across the current ; down
Beyond the drift where in deep pools,
 Among the mosses' tawny brown,
 The lazy river-mussels cling ;
Where little turtles hide, and schools
 Of tiny fishes flash in view,
And part, and dart, and start anew
 In eager aimless journeying.

THE BAYOU

On, past the slender reeds that swing
Their tufts of tasselled bloom, and show
Where sweet-flags grow ;
Past willow wands that weave and fling
Athwart the way a waving screen,
Through which the tinkling ripples flow,
And sing, and ring,
With drowsy murmurs, soft and slow,
And ceaseless silver cadencing ;
— But there, just where the bushes lean
And cross in leafy archway, hung
With rosy mallow-flowers, and strung
With ivory button-balls, and green
With tender freshness everywhere,
Just there
Turn, and steer straightway in be-
tween.

Ah, surely none would ever guess
That through that tangled wilderness,
Through those far forest depths remote,
Lay any smallest path, much less
A way wherein to guide a boat !
But whoso knows the stream, and shares
The rare deep secrets that it hides,
Nor e'er confides
Save only unto him who bears

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

True love of nature's lore,
 And dares
Her inmost pathways to explore,
— Unto such sympathetic eyes
The river, oft-times unawares,
 Leads onward to some sweet surprise.

And so, push gently through the dense
 Low button-balls,
And plummy growths of wild-rice, whence
 At cautious, watchful intervals,
 The brooding hermit-bittern calls ;
Then steering slowly, in and out,
 Curve close about
The lofty forest trees, and wind
Among the willows, intertwined
 And crept across
By scarlet trumpet-vines, that toss
In lavish richness unconfined
 Above the blooming water-moss ;
The trailing, tufted moss, that makes
A carpet of its starry flakes
 So thick that one may scarcely see
 The long lithe lily-stems that grow
 Far down below
With buds of pearl and gold enshrined
Amid vague under-greenery.

THE BAYOU

And lightly, here and there, among
The russet rushes, as you go,
The curling, purling ripples flow,
And to and fro,
With fitful motion, faintly stir
The fine green film the waves have hung
About the underwood, and flung
In scarfs of shining gossamer
Upon the grasses, lush and low ;
— Then presently,
Beyond the lily-pads, maybe,
There breaks the softly vibrant whirl
Of wafting wings, and through the reeds,
Uprising — rising — far and free,
A sweetly-fluting throstle speeds
With burst of mellow melody.

But from the forest depths profound
There comes no sound ;
So dusk, so dense, so wholly still,
The outer winds that thither stray
Sweep slowly on, from tree to tree,
And down long shadowed ways, until,
Charged with the strange solemnity
Those hushed and hidden haunts instil,
All silently, into the day
They steal away.

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

— And there, within the bayou's heart,
 Adrift, apart
From all save that untrodden wood,
 So deep
Secluded in the solitude
 Of those tall towering trees, that keep
The very atmosphere imbued
 With breath of primal peacefulness,
— There, clasped in Nature's close
 caress,
Slipped sheer from all inquietude,
 At peace upon the limpid stream,
I know no other ways that seem
 So sweet wherein to drift and dream.

There, floating on in tranquil mood,
 The tire, the tumult, and the stress,
 The dreary brood
 Of toil and fret
 And fevered, never-ending care,
— All, all this wide world's weariness
 Seems elsewhere ;
So far, far elsewhere ! — And yet,
 Through reason of the peaceful air
 My own griefs wear,
 That very sense of farness steals
 Into my heart with strange appeals ;

THE BAYOU

All distant strife of living pleads
 Its needs,
 Remote, half-comprehended, — still
 With such insistent pathos, till
My dream-borne spirit wakes and heeds ;
 That sentient stillness stirs in me
 A keener, subtler sympathy ;
My inmost being throbs, expands,
 And understands
 More what the restless world may be.

And like the free reed-birds that fly
From those green tangles to the sky,
Yet seek the bayou, by and by,
 So, on a nobler, higher quest,
 New-fledging from its body nest,
 My eager soul soars up and sees
 More of God's gracious mysteries ;
Wherefrom a larger love it learns,
And then, with humble mien, returns,
 Divines, more near, the perfect rest
 Of Nature's breast,
 And so, touched tenderly through these,
 Feels more of true humanities.

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

IN YOUTH

NOT lips of mine have ever said :
“ Would God that I were dead ! ”
Nay, cruel griefs ! ye cannot break
My love of life ; nor can ye make
Oblivion blest in anywise,
Nor death seem sweet for sorrow's sake.
Life ! Life ! my every pulse outcries
For life, and love, and quickened breath,
O God, — not, *not* for death !

MIDSUMMER

UPON the fields a golden blur,
Pink bindweeds trailing through the
corn ;
From orchard boughs the muffled whir
Of bright wings, faintly borne ;
Along the roads, pale amethyst
Of plummy banks of bergamot ;
And in my eyes a rising mist
Of grief, or joy, — I know not what !

Again I feel the old sweet ache
That fills the heart for beauty's sake ;
The yearning tenderness that grieves

MISTRAL'S POEM "MIRÈIO"

O'er fields, and flowers, and wind-blown
leaves,

And golden sheaves,
And loveliness of earth and sky,
In strange sharp pangs, — we know not
why.

The pain that baffles him who tries
In anywise

Its subtile grief to analyze ;
And yet that is a joy that thrills
And overfills

The quivering soul, and clarifies
Its eager vision unto fine
Undreamed-of raptures, all-divine !

And so I let the surging tears,
Unquestioned, brim my happy eyes,
While all my harkening spirit hears
The great Earth-song uprising.

MISTRAL'S POEM "MIRÈIO"

A ROSE of song that tops the tree
In sunny gardens over-sea,
Where grows the golden fleur-de-lis,
The myrtle, and
In scented clusters, dewy wet,

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

The blue Provençal violet,
The land of lilting chansonette,
The poets' land.

Like music swept from silver strings
The pure sweet love the poet sings,
And what though touched with sorrowings
And grievous woes,
Yet still the tender tale thereof
Is dear all other themes above,
A perfect song of perfect love ;
For like the rose

That leans against the garden wall,
Though on its petals raindrops fall
And chill winds buffet, yet withal,
When matched with this,
Not all the shining lily spires
Nor any scarlet poppy fires
So satisfy the heart's desires ;
And so love is.

THE HILL PASTURE

IN silky balls beside the stream
The pussy-willows stand,
Where thick the yellow cowslips gleam
Upon the reedy land.

THE MIST

And up the hillside, green and steep,
The lacing dogwood boughs
In fleeting glimpses show the sheep
Like blossoms as they browse.

The redbud trees are wrapped in rose,
The hawthorn throbs and pales,
And launched by every breeze that blows
The elm seeds spread their sails.

They float like shining spangles bright
A down the sunny air,
And cargoes sweet of sheer delight
Unto my heart they bear.

In happy dreams I watch the flocks,
While, like a lavish king,
With golden key the day unlocks
The treasures of the spring.

THE MIST

ABOVE the bayou, softly bright
With coronal of silver rays,
Through rifting drifts of pearly haze
And rings of rosy halo-light,
Across the sweet October night
The rising full-moon rode ;

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

And lifting airily its load
Of leaf and fruit and tangled fret
Of little twigs, while newly glowed
Her perfect disk, a linden showed
In graceful silhouette.

Sometimes the waxing moonbeams fell
Athwart the river's brink and crossed
Its still tide with their magic spell,
Till all the trailing water-grass
Glittered like trceries of frost
Upon a pane of glass.

In veils of vapor, far away
To east and west, the marshes lay ;
A pallid wilderness, whereon
Vague ferns and ghostly grasses grew,
Tall moon-tipped rushes, and a few
Weird water-willows, faint of hue,
And sedges slim and wan.

Then presently, slow gathering through
The gleaming air, like webs that blow
At autumn time across the blue
In fleecy garlands white as snow
And light as any feather, so
The mist hung quivering, wreath on wreath ;

OCTOBER SONG

And gently, somewhere underneath,
The river murmured low.

So spectral, yet so strangely fair,
All nature softly swept from sight,
Till soon there only lingered there
The earth's eidolon, still and white ;
Whence ever, through that shrouding air,
Dissolving in the breathless night,
Fine forces mounted, spirit-wise ;
In shining wraiths I saw them pass,
And essences of trees and grass
Rise soul-like to the skies.

OCTOBER SONG

THE locust trees are hung with pods
Of glossy russet-brown,
And tawny leaves of sycamores
Are swiftly drifting down.

Their purple clusters, over-ripe,
The trailing wild-grapes show ;
And frost-tipped woodbine clambers up
From scarlet depths below.

Still clinging to the clover stalks
Are blossoms, white and sweet ;

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

And pricked in tufted rows, the fields
Are green with winter wheat.

On furrowed mold, where grew the corn,
Pale, golden stubble stands ;
And lingering blackbirds pipe and trill
Through swampy meadow-lands.

Far, far above, within the blue,
Half hid in lofty flight,
A hawk sails slow, and sunward turns
A breast of shining white.

The air is full of milkweed films,
And floating thistle floss ;
And busily the spiders spin
Their silver nets across

The red-oak's tangled undergrowth
Of lacing boughs, and string
The yellow lindens, that the winds
Are rudely pillaging.

And where the ruddy maples blaze
Athwart the gusty air,
It lifts their leaves like little flames,
And puffs them everywhere.

CONSCIENCE

But what if, loosed with fitful touch,
The woodland doffs its gown ;
What if the fallow hillside grass
Grows slowly crisp and brown !

What matter that the truant sun
Slips southward, day by day,
And that, hard by, the winter waits
To hood the skies in gray !

I'll find but deeper joy in this,
The autumn's pageantry ;
And sumac boughs are brighter far
Than dark forebodings be.

CONSCIENCE

AH, God ! Ah, God ! if we but knew
What hosts of haunting griefs we stir,
What sorrowing spectres will pursue
The least ungentle acts we do,
I think we would be patienter !

O throbbing heart and conscience, cease !
Be still, be still, and give me peace !

How could I guess, how could I know
That from such blighting words would grow

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

Thought-harvests that could trouble so ?
That in my heart sharp-bladed wrath
Would reap such bitter aftermath ?

Had I not borne, and borne, and borne ?
Was not my spirit overworn
With ceaseless striving to repress ?
Should blame fall if for one brief space
Swift scorn gained place ?
Must burdened wrong seek no redress ?
— Yet, oh, all arguments how vain !
The grief remains not any less.
I only know the tears like rain
Storm from my eyes ! and I would fain
 Endure again
The hurt, the heartache, and the pain !
Oh, rather all that old distress
Than this most keen remorsefulness !

EVENING DOWN THE "LONG DRIFT "

BLUE as the forest far and dim
Upon the vague horizon's rim,
As softly shadowed as the green
Rush-tasselled marshlands in between,
Rose-tinctured as the light that lies

DOWN THE "LONG DRIFT"

Within the tender evening skies,
As golden as the afterglow
That quivers up the west, and so
As many colored as the tones
That chase through changeful opal stones,
 The river ripples by,
 And I
 Am floating into fairyland.

On either hand
The pale, green-wanded willows stand
 In feathery tufts whose shadows hide
 Haunts where the shy wild-birds abide ;
 And through the reeds
The lush rose-mallow bushes lean,
Where screened by burgeoned button-balls,
 And tall wild-rice, the bittern feeds,
 And, clasped in clinging water-weeds,
White folded lily buds are seen,
 And spikes of blazing cardinals,

 That like inverted torches show
 And burn and glow
Down deep transparent pools and swirls,
 Where soft as silk the river-moss
 Spins slender threads of filmy floss
Strung thick with little lucent seeds,

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

While in and out and close across
The fragile plantain-flower unfurls,
And, thrusting through the dripping reeds,
Star-worts, like tiny divers, toss
Their hoards of blossom pearls.

Through dimpling deeps and eddy whirls,
Far, far below,
With fitful motion, swift and slow,
The shining fishes come and go ;
And all the limpid pools unfold
Rare treasures shrined in sands of gold ;
For so

While down the sheer clear stream I gaze,
The tempered evening light betrays
Sweet secrets, that the dazzling days
With their bewildering fire and glow,
And over-wealth of sun, withhold.

— Ah, gently, gently, gently blow,
Sweet winds of heaven now ! for slow
Upfloating from the dewy mold,
The mist is rolled !

O lightly, most divinely breathe,
While yonder airy vapors sheathe
The grassy marshes till they grow
Too faint for any eye to know ;

DOWN THE "LONG DRIFT"

And see ! like tissue veils that hold
Fantastic river-genii bold,
They rise, and rise, and twine and wreathe,
And all the crystal stream enfold.

On, on through wonderland I go,
And hear the silvery ebb and flow,
And chiming cadence, soft and low,
Of tiny tinkling waves that creep
Like thousand little liquid flutes
Among the twisted maple-roots ;
While from the forest, still and deep,
The night-owl calls,
And distant wandering west-winds sweep
With murmurous melody that falls
As faintly as a song of sleep,
With drowsy, dreamful intervals.

To some enchanted tune
They croon
Sweet lullabies ;
While deeper, ever deeper grows
The violet tinge upon the rose
Within the water-skies ;
Where rays of pearl and purple gleam
From spangling scallop-shells, till soon
Confusedly through all the stream

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

The stars are strewn ;
And meshed in mocking greenery
Of oak, and ash, and willow-tree,
And trailing tangled grass, I see
The little crescent moon.

— Oh, keen-felt joy and strange distress
Of nature's perfect graciousness !
I feel your sweetly poignant smart
Within my heart,
Till, wrought by beauty's sheer excess,
Quick teardrops start beyond restraint,
And all my very soul grows faint
With loveliness.

BAFFLED

AH ! would that I that baffling touch
Might know,
That oftentimes, as on a sounding-board,
Strikes in my soul a strange elusive chord ;
That, grieving me with unremembered woe,
Yet hints as surely of some long ago
Glad life and joy, in lavish wealth out-
poured,
Till all my waking memory beats accord,
And throbs and strives to grasp and prove it
so.

EARTH VOICES

But ere its eager message I may learn,
It sinks back fettered, with a nameless
pain ;
Yet evermore I know it must return
With sense of truth that battles to be
plain ;
And in this subtile consciousness I yearn
For that full knowledge which I seek in
vain.

EARTH VOICES

O NOT alone in human hearts that throb,
Do grief and joy find voice ;
For, even so, the fields and forests sob,
And, even so, rejoice.

There is no certain, separating line
That wisest men may trace ;
Where sentience ceases no one may divine,
Nor fix its bound or place.

For he who humbly, reverently bends
To them the harkening ear,
From trees and grasses straightway compre-
hends
Heart-tidings sweet and clear.

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

The earth confides, as from a million lips,
Its gladness and distress ;
With everything he finds true fellowships,
And kindred consciousness.

And knows that through the green leaves
overhead,
And through the silent clod,
Through man and nature runs one golden
thread
That binds them both to God.

A LITTLE CASCADE

THE shining water slipped and slipped
Adown the mossy rocks, and dripped
From off fine fringing ferns in drops
Of endless threaded pearls, that tipped
The tasselled sedge and alder tops
With flickering light ; and then it sipped
A drowsy draught of sun, and dipped
Beneath small, clustering buds, and hid
Among lush marigolds, and slid
Between tall, serried ranks of reeds,
And stroked their little leaves, and lipped
The flower-spangled jewel-weeds ;
Then, speeding suddenly amid

PERSISTENT

Faint shimmering spray, it lightly tripped
Across white pebbly sand, and stripped
The marsh-flower's gold, and fled, half-seen,
A splash of silver through the green.

PERSISTENT

A LITTLE picture haunts me ;
It comes and comes again :
It is a tiny bird's nest,
All ragged from the rain.

It clings within a birch-tree
Upon the moorland's edge,
Between the barren branches,
Above the swaying sedge.

The sky is gray behind it,
And when the north winds blow,
The birch-tree bends and shivers,
And tosses to and fro.

I wonder, does it haunt them,
The birds that flew away ?
And will they come to seek it,
Some sunny summer day ?

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

I wonder, does some redbreast
Upon an orange bough,
Still picture it as plainly
As I can view it now ?

Ah, me ! I would forget it,
Yet still, with sense of pain,
I see this little bird's nest
Within the driving rain.

FLOOD-TIME ON THE MARSHES

DEAR marshes, by no hand of man
Laboriously sown,
My river clasps you in its arms
And claims you for its own !
It laughs, and laughs, and twinkles on
Across the reedy soil,
That heed of harvest vexes not,
Nor need of any toil.

And in my heart I joy to know
That safe within this spot
Sweet nature reigns ; let other fields
Bear bread, it matters not.
— What matters aught of anything
When one may drift away

FLOOD-TIME ON THE MARSHES

Into the realms of all-delight,
As I drift on to-day ?

Beneath the budded swamp-rose sprays
The blue-eyed grasses stand,
Submerged within a crystal world,
A limpid wonderland ;
And where the clustered sedges show
Their silky-tasselled sheaves,
The slender arrow-lily lifts
Its quiver of green leaves.

The tiny waves lap softly past,
So musical and round,
I think they must be molded out
Of sunshine and sweet sound.
And here and there some little knoll,
More lofty than the rest,
Stands out above the happy tide,
An island of the blest ;

Where fringed with lacy fronds of fern
The grass grows rich and high,
And flowering spider-worts have caught
The color of the sky ;
Where water-oaks are thickly strung
With green and golden balls,

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

And from tall tilting iris tips
The wild canary calls.

— O gracious world ! I seem to feel
A kinship with the trees ;
I am first-cousin to the marsh,
A sister to the breeze !
My heartstrings tremble to its touch,
In throbs supremely sweet,
And through my pulses light and life
And love divinely meet.

Far off, the sunbeams smite the woods,
And pearly fleeces sail
Athwart the light, and leave below
A purple-shadowed trail ;
The essence of the perfect June
So subtly is distilled,
Until my very soul of souls
Is filled, and overfilled !

JULY

STILL lingering along the lanes
A few late elder-blossoms blow,
And here and there a wild-rose, though
Within their veins

AUTUMN COBWEBS

The crimson currents fainter grow,
The pilgrim south-wind slowly drains
Their fragile chalices, and slow
The butterflies forsake the fanes
Found fair a little while ago.
Through all the fields, in orange stains
The flaming milkweeds burn and glow
Like blazing beacon-fires to show
July beleaguers June ; and low
O'erborne, her bloomy banner wanes,
The while he gains
Her last sweet citadel, — and so,
Supreme in conquering splendor reigns !

AUTUMN COBWEBS

THE grass is veiled with cobwebs,
Their slender silken strands
Are looped about the lilacs ;
And on the fallow lands
The seeded weeds and brambles
With shining skeins are bound,
And scarlet dogwood branches
Are wound and interwound.

They wrap the thorny hedges,
And shimmer in between

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

The fruited elder thickets
With faint elusive sheen ;
They hang across the wheat blades,
And in the mellow light
So fill the fields with splendor
As gold or silver might.

The orchard boughs are distaffs
Wherefrom the wind and sun
Seem reeling filmy flosses
Of which white threads are spun ;
They trail from yellow cornstalks
And wayside thistles, too,
And fleecy tufts are drifting
Far up into the blue.

And even as I watch them
They brush across my lips,
And float about my forehead
And touch my finger-tips ;
It is as if the Autumn,
In sheer excess of grace,
Would fondle me and hold me
In her divine embrace.

THE OLD GARDEN, IN SEPTEMBER

THE OLD GARDEN, IN SEPTEMBER

A MORNING-GLORY vine has bound
The leaning gate half-open, so
A ragged row

Of vagrant poppy plants have found
The grassy path beyond its bar,
And, capped in crumpled scarlet, go
A bold

Bright throng of truants, trooping far
Adown the wayside's mossy mold,
And fallow ground,
That bits of bloom have bossed and scrolled
In lavish limning wide around,
And tufts of hardy fennel-star
Have pricked and spangled white and gold.

And high above the paling fence,
And thrusting softly in between,
The sweet-syringa bushes lean,
A mass of checkered shadows, whence,
With fluttering glints of silver sheen,
Half-hid, half-seen,
From curving canopies of green
Close-lapping leaves and thickets dense,
White butterflies drift down and bring
The hint of spring,

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

And mock the May-time's opulence
And pride of pearly blossoming.

Red coral beads already string
The unpruned sprays
A score of briar-roses fling
And trail across the tangled maze
Of sunshine, shadow, winding ways,
And pebbly paths where, fine as down,
Soft new grass shows,
That grows
From seeds the sower South-wind blows
Off unmown tassels, high and brown.

And since afar the summer goes,
And lilies wane
And fade and follow in her train,
And, lapsed through lessened line, the
last
Long glory of the roses' reign
Is overpast,
Within the garden's kingdom close
The year bestows
A color coronet, that lies
Upon the marigolds, and vies
In richness with the regal guise
Of starry crest and purple stain

THE OLD GARDEN IN SEPTEMBER

The first unfolding aster shows ;
That proud and princely suzerain
Of quaint beds edged with crimson
 phlox,
 And four o'clocks,
And files of fluted pinks, and rows
Of great tall tilting hollyhocks.

The pear-tree leaves are bronze and red ;
 And overhead,
Beyond the thick-set barberry hedge,
 Beneath the vane-tipped gable peak,
 A yellow streak
Of burnished sunshine gilds the edge
 And drips its amber lacquer through
The lichens of a little ledge
 Where, verging sharply into view
 Against the small
Deep-shadowed squares that pierce the
 wall,
 A pair of pigeons preen and coo :
They turn, and toss, and softly call,
Then poised with fanning wings outspread,
With many a sidewise dip and glance,
 And look askance,
At last, launched boldly into flight,
 Speed straight ahead —

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

Athwart the blue, a pulsing, bright,
Swift throb of white.

And loosed and sprinkled as they pass,
 Upon the grass
 In gusty storms the red leaves fall ;
And here and there the way is tinged
With late-sprung dandelions, and fringed
 With hoary dusty-miller leaves,
 And spicy gilly-flowers, and sheaves
 Of ribbon-grasses, stiff and tall ;
While surging softly over all,
The sweet September weather creeps
 Along the paths in sparkling streams,
And where its happy high-tide sweeps
 In mellow deeps
 Of warmth, and light, and limpid
 beams,
A lazy kitten basks and sleeps.

And close beside, bright dahlias rear
 Along the walks
A horde of nodding tops, and peer
 Between the leaning sunflower stalks :
Those veterans of the early year,
That smitten now with age, and sear
 In tattered garb of tawny hue,

THE OLD GARDEN IN SEPTEMBER

Stand feebly swaying through the weeds,
Whereon, in scattered showers, they
strew

Thin sifted seeds

From out the darkened disks they hold,

And, shorn and rayless, idly swing,

Nor longer sunward, as of old,

Lift up in loyal worshiping ;

— But pause a space ! for, by and by,

From out the blue

Far reaches of the autumn sky,

With buoyant speed and eager wing,

A feathered flock comes wheeling down,

So circling in a rapid ring

Till all at once, on every brown

And withered head, with grace untold,

In yellow fringe the finches cling,

A halo light, a living crown,

A very aureole of gold,

Transmuting and transfiguring !

Through plummy grass the crickets whirl ;

And ever, wavering in the breeze,

Between the low-boughed pippin trees,

In lacy films fine cobwebs stir,

And swing, half-seen, their broideries ;

Till suddenly some shaft of light

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

Strikes out a single silver line
To shine
 An instant, and then intertwine,
 And fade,
 And merge in dusky strands of
 shade,
 The overhanging branches braid ;
 So
 To and fro,
Now bright,
 Now quite
 Slipped out of sight ;
 Then presently a woven blur
Of swaying, silken gossamer.

— Ah, tempered sky, and bloomy things,
And scent, and song, and wafting wings,
 All sweetest syllables were vain
 To render plain
The garden's dreamy whisperings !
 The tender beauty of the spot,
 The nameless spell, — I know not what,
Nor have I skill in any way
 To so convey
 Those gracious secrets I would fain
 Find art to say !
But in the sunshine, watching these

PRESENTIMENT

Slight threads that loop the apple-trees,
So, too, I weave this web of song,
Whose tissue, touched by fancy's long
Bright
Wand of light,
Is but the half-caught fitful sheen
Through that unseen
Close warp of love, forever bound
And interwound,
As fine as floss, yet strong as steel ;
Whereof I feel
Not any years that intervene,
Nor any stress of space, may part
Its golden ties, that lie between
This old-time garden and my heart.

PRESENTIMENT

OFTTIMES I feel, yet know not why,
This haunting prescience stir in me :
I know that when I come to die
— It matters not where that may be,
— Or near or far, on land or sea,
An overpowering wish to lie
Beneath the roof I loved so well,
In that dear shelter wherein we,
In life's sweet April, used to dwell,

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

Where first my baby lips drew breath,
Oh, in the bitterness of death
 This wish will bring fresh agony !
That hearth where now no fires are lit,
My heart will break desiring it.

THE EXILES

BARE blackened boughs
That seem to press
 Low skies, storm-swept and pitiless,
Must be the only roofs to house
 Or shelter their distress.

They tread by night
 Beneath the trees ;
 Before them desert distances,
Whereon the endless snows are white,
 And endless tempests freeze.

Their eyes are bound,
 And iron bands
 Are heavy on their helpless hands
Ordnained to delve the barren ground
 Of bleak, unlovely lands.

Week after week,
 Across the snow

IN MID-OCTOBER

And weary wastes, they wander so ;
No human heart wherein to seek
Surcease of any woe.

Forevermore
Their footsteps wend
Afar from hearth, and home, and friend ;
Nor know they what grief hath in store
Before the bitter end.

Whate'er their deeds,
It matters not ;
Their very names shall be forgot ;
Their agony, their heartsick needs,
And their forsaken lot.

IN MID-OCTOBER

THE dewy morning sky is pale
Where, steeped in dazzling light,
The southward-slipping sunbeams veil
Its pearly depths from sight.

But in the north, more pure and deep
Than ever summer knew,
The sweet October heavens keep
Their rich autumnal blue.

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

The little clouds float out so clear,
Slow shredding in the breeze,
I think none ever strayed so near
These lofty forest trees.

Along the smoky river's edge
Green marsh-moss thickly grows,
And smart-weeds glisten in the sedge
Like coral, white and rose.

And ruby-bodied dragon-flies
In shining clusters pause,
Or dart and sparkle, jewel-wise,
On wings of silver gauze,

Where tangled water-plants and grass
Come drifting round the reeds,
To find fresh cargoes, as they pass,
Of shells and scarlet seeds.

Adown the current, through the moss,
The yellow willows show
Like golden arras hung across
The water-world below.

Yet still the birch and maple trees
Have barely felt the frost,

IN MID-OCTOBER

Nor hint of happy harmonies
The blackbird notes have lost.

And pink wild-roses, here and there,
Are blossoming anew,
While through the prairies everywhere
The violets are blue.

It is as if the aging year
A second time has found
Its childhood, whose first playthings here
Lie scattered on the ground.

And with such rarest vernal spell
It touches everything,
Till tintured, too, I scarce can tell
If this be fall or spring !

For if the April airs were sweet,
These are not any less ;
Nor was the May-time more replete
With perfect blessedness.

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

PRESENT JOY

O HEART, beat swiftly ! that there may
No least allotted part
Of happiness elude thee ; nay,
Seize quickly that thou canst, nor stay
Too long in quest of greater, when
The spring so surely wears away,
The summer skies grow cold and gray,
And chill night cometh after day,
— Beat swifter, then,
O heart !

For since fleet sorrow still pursues,
All gladness to destroy ;
Since wintry winds wait but to bruise
And break the foolish flower whose
Bright-petaled buds too late unfold ;
Oh ! therefore no faint ray refuse
Of warmth or light, but rather choose
Each gleam to cherish, lest thou lose
Thy little hold
Of joy.

And if it so be given thee
In anywise to taste
The brimming crystal purity

NOVEMBER MORNING

Of life's deep springs, not listlessly
Let their clear stream go by, but speed
To sip its sweets while sweet they be ;
For slipping on they seek the sea,
The years roll past, and presently
 There is no need
 To haste.

NOVEMBER MORNING

ATINGLING, misty marvel
Blew hither in the night,
And now the little peach-trees
Are clasped in frozen light.

On linden tips and maples
 An icy film is caught,
With shining threads of cobwebs
 In pearly patterns wrought.

The autumn sun, in wonder,
 Is gayly peering through
This crystal-tissued network
 Across the frosty blue.

The weather-vane shows silver
 Above the mossy leads

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

That glitter, brightly ice-glazed,
In rare transparent reds.

And round the eaves are fringes
Wherein the seven hues,
That bar the summer rainbows,
Congeal and interfuse.

Upon the walks the pebbles
Are each a precious stone ;
The grass is tasselled hoar-frost,
The clover jewel-sown.

Such sparkle, sparkle, sparkle,
In earth and sky and air,
Oh ! can it be that darkness
Is ever anywhere ?

CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE CATHEDRAL

A THOUSAND tapers make the mid-
night bright,
And blaze about the carved cathedral
choir,
And touch the marble angels' wings with
fire,

CHRISTMAS CHANT

And fill their faces with a golden light ;
So fair they are, in folded robes of white,
 It almost seems those parted lips suspire,
 Divinely yearning for the heart's desire,
The marvel that shall glorify the night.

Then, all at once, from out the ancient
 tower,
 The bells peal forth ! and swelling over
 them
The grand Te Deum magnifies the power
 Of Him the holy, born in Bethlehem ;
— O dearest Child ! no gifts nor incense
 sweet,
But my full heart, I offer at Thy feet.

CHRISTMAS CHANT ROYAL TO THE KING OF KINGS

WHAT God hath wrought, long cen-
 turies ago,
 What man hath cherished in divinest lore,
Chant, richly chant ! In stately chords and
 slow,
 Intone the marvel done this day of yore.
Sing of the star that burned so strangely
 bright,

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

Of angel voices heard that hallowed night,
When all the folding heavens, east and
west,
Betrayed the coming of earth's gracious
Guest,
And, steeped in prescient joyfulness, all
things
Did glorify a little Babe's behest.
All hail to Him, the holy King of kings !

Yea ! sing how though unto the Child did go
The wizard ones, to worship and adore,
And lowly bending at His feet bestow
The gold, and myrrh, and frankincense
they bore ;
How though high heaven, in starry splendor
dight,
Did homage to the promised Prince of light,
Nathless, below, men idly slept, nor
guessed
The priceless gift of great Messiah blest ;
Nor star, nor song, nor shining angel-wings
That lordly presence anywise confessed !
All hail to Him, the holy King of kings !

For so God chose from out a manger low
The Light divine of all the world to pour ;

CHRISTMAS CHANT

And so He willed His own dear Son should
go

In mortal guise from out that stable door ;
Yet did He gird Him with such matchless
might

'Gainst death, and wrong, and evilness to
smite,

That for all souls by sieging sins opprest,
He made the certain citadel of rest.

What need, indeed, of earthly blazonings,

Of pomp, of purple, or of regal crest ?

All hail to Him, the holy King of kings !

The Nazarene, reviled, acquaint with woe,

Who all our mortal garb of sorrow wore ;

Who meekly proved how that He loved us so,

Nor shame, nor scorn, nor grievous death
forbore ;

The risen Monarch, from before whose sight

All powers of evil flee in sore affright ;

The piteous Lord, whose all-forgiving
breast

Hath boundless bounty both for worst
and best ;

The God majestic, whence, eternal, springs

All glory, grace, and light ineffablest.

All hail to Him, the holy King of kings !

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

Aye ! though the years to olden cycles grow,
Yet still, with newborn gladness, o'er and
o'er
Men learn the lesson of the Christ, and so
Shall all the ages hence forevermore ;
Forevermore shall earth His praise recite,
And sound His greatness unto heaven's
height ;
Still sinful souls, by His great love
caressed,
Shall fain forego each God-forbidden
quest,
And seek the ceaseless shelter that He brings
The hurt, the helpless, and the heart dis-
tressed.
All hail to Him, the holy King of kings !

Envoy

And so this day, though loosed in flurried
flight
The spangling snows enwrap the world in
white,
Let every hearth with holly-boughs be drest,
This feast's fair honor freshly to attest ;
Let trolls be trolled, and every bell that rings
With chiming cadence still the theme invest :
All hail to Him, the holy King of kings !

THE MARSH MIST

THE MARSH MIST

THE sun slipped red behind the haze
Of distant forest boughs, that raise
In softened lines along the west,
 A leafy crest.
The marshy prairie-land became
A shining, many-colored maze ;
A tracery of gold and flame ;
 An airy blaze
Of rosy radiance without name !
Of ruddy fire that crept,
 And swept,
Through all the lacing water-ways.

— Then, by-and-by,
Beyond the rushes, lush and high,
The June sunset grew overpast,
The little limpid pools, that lie
Among the sedges, faintly glassed
 The last
Pale afterglow, whose yellow rays
 Flared up the dusky, western sky.

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

In tangled lines of silver sheen
 The long grass leant ;
 And breeze-tossed birches swayed and bent
Above tall weeds and reeds, and green
Wild rice and mosses, where, half-seen,
Red lilies glowed, and, idly spent,
 The wandering night-wind lightly went.

Sharp-cut against the eastern blue,
The deep green forest deeper grew ;
 The leaves stirred, for a little space ;
 Then full and near,
Within the tender violet skies,
The moon rode up in gracious guise ;
And drifting darkly, level-wise,
With wings outspread in lazy grace,
 Across her face,
A wild crane voyaged slowly through
 The clear,
Sweet depths of dewy atmosphere.

So fell the night ; hushed, slumber-bound ;
 Not any sound
In all that wilderness was made ;
Nor did a single bird invade
The utter silence, wide and deep,
Therein the lowland lay asleep.

THE MARSH MIST

Between the faintly spangling stars,
 In silver bars,
The mellow moonlight beamed and streamed ;
And then — divinely visible — it seemed
 The marshes dreamed !
In vaporous wreaths and films unwound
 Above the ground,
A strange white vision floated round !

The grass grew hoary ; every blade
Was rich with rime, that overlaid,
 In drifts of misty flakes, the frets
 Of countless, quivering spider-nets ;
While mocking, frosty filagrees
 Wrapped all the trees ;
The reeds took on a sudden chill ;
 An icy fringe began to freeze
Upon the tasselled sedge ; — until,
 Dissolving slow, with dreamful ease,
That wintry phantasy had merged
 (But, ah, so subtly, silently !)
To mimic waves, that swept and surged,
 Till all the marshes seemed to be
 A boundless sea,
In whose vague depths long grasses trailed,
 Touched out by bright,
 Swift sparks of phosphorescent light,
Where gleaming fire-flies flashed and paled.

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

So, to and fro, with restless sweep,
 Borne back and forth by ceaseless swells,
The tide rolled in ; and here and there
 Laid bare,
Within its tossing, billowy deep,
 The pink marsh-roses shone like shells.

Through lingering change of lessened light,
 Within the west,
The moon went waning out of sight ;
 The little stars glowed half confessed ;
Across the sedge the eastern gray
Verged surely onward into day ;
 The darkness hovered eerily ;
 A chilling damp the air oppressed ;

— Then freshly, gently as may be,
Sweet hints of dawning came to fill
 All things with hushed serenity.
The misty surge grew calm and still ;
 The marshes dreamed of perfect rest.

— But suddenly
 A reed-bird piped within its nest !
And borne with faint presaging thrill,
 From out the margin of the dim
 Horizon's rim,

THE MARSH MIST

With cleaving motion from below,
Some dawn-blown current's underflow
Ran rippling through that airy sea ;
And, changed and channelled by such wide
 Disturbing tide,
Impalpably it seemed to grow
More fleecy white, to break and rift,
And, fanned by viewless force, to lift,
 — And drift, — and drift, —
To wander higher, — and more high,
 — And so,
Within the sunny summer sky,
A morning cloud began to blow.

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

ENVOY

IF I had lived among the mountain peaks,
Through whose fine air
And purest ether, crystalline and rare,
The voice of nature most divinely speaks ;
Where far and free the winds of heaven
blow,
And from below
Not any mist nor valley vapor mars
The little stars ;
If viewing all things from such lofty height,
Might it not then been given me to know
All things more truly, and through keener
sight ?
And so,
From off the mountains could I not have
caught
Some semblance of their majesty, and
wrought
More high and strong
In song ?

Or had some fate decreed for me to dwell
Beside the tide
Of the great ocean, fathomless and wide,

ENVOY

Whose mighty billows' ceaseless ebb and
swell

Tell ever of that grand sublimity

Within the sea,

Of storms that gather, and white gulls that
cry

From out the sky ;

If listening daily to the surges break

Along the shining sand, tumultuously,
Might not some echo of their voice awake

In me ?

Might not my song some subtler essence win,
And would not something, like the sea,
therein

More deep and clear

Appear ?

— And yet I know not were it loss or gain

Away from these

My native hills, and stream and forest
trees,

And level fields of richly-growing grain :

I cannot tell if they my song have filled,
Or something stilled,

Nor all that I have lacked, or they have
lent ;

But am content,

ONE WAY TO THE WOODS

Nay, more, thrice happy, if it be that they
So bid me sing that any pulse is thrilled
With hint of lightest summer wind, whose
play
Has spilled
The honey from the least sweet wild-rose
vine ;
Or if, faint echoing up from any line,
Some meadow bird
Is heard.

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